Preliminary Summary of Information

Submitted to the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in November 2022

The Pioneer Arcade
1535-1545 North Pulaski Road

CITY OF CHICAGO
Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

Cover photo by Patrick Pyszka.

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

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THE PIONEER ARCADE
1535-1545 NORTH PULASKI ROAD
BUILT: 1924-1925
ARCHITECT: JENS J. JENSEN

INTRODUCTION

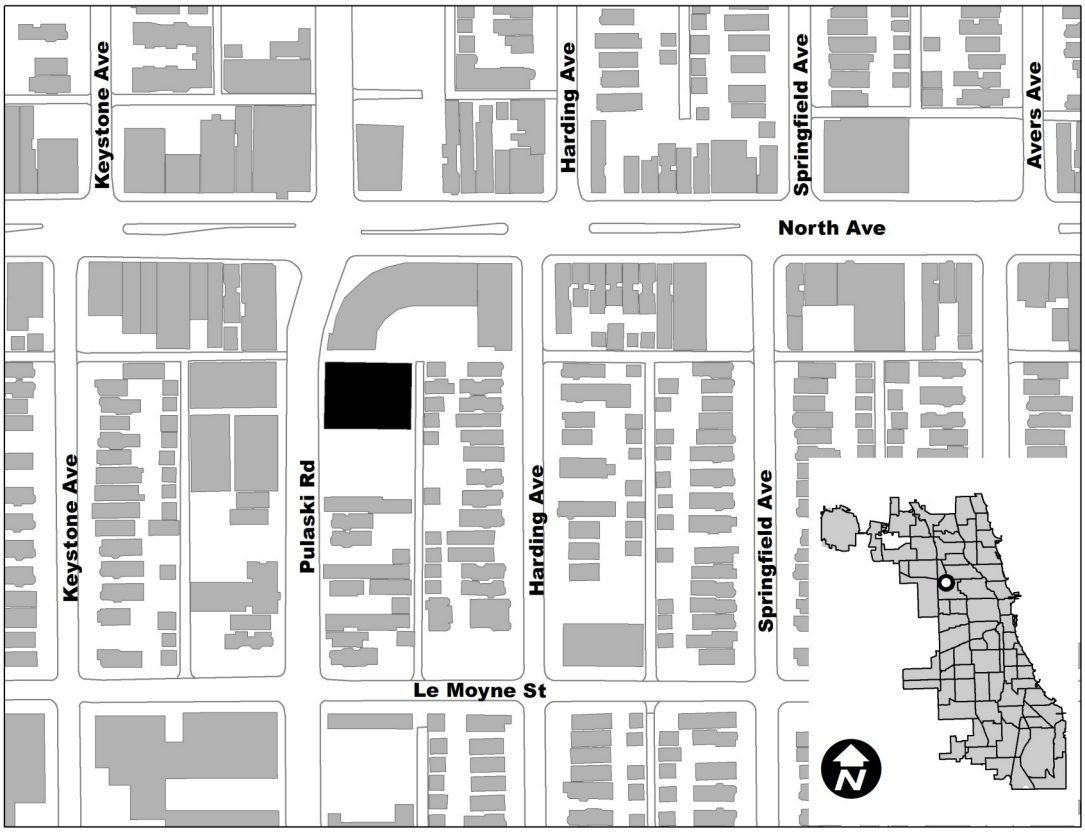
Completed in 1925, the Pioneer Arcade at 1535-1545 North Pulaski Road in Chicago was designed by Danish-born Chicago architect Jens J. Jensen (1891- 1969) for Greek-born entrepreneur Constantinos "Gust" Regas (1894-1986). This Spanish Baroque Revival-style structure, conceived as an elaborate social and entertainment center for Chicago's growing Humboldt Park community, is one of the last remaining large-scale commercial buildings that formed a neighborhood commercial center at the intersection of North Avenue and Pulaski Road (formerly Crawford Avenue). As one of Chicago's grandest urban sports halls surviving from the 1920s, the Pioneer Arcade stands as an important illustration of the development of America's twentieth-century leisure culture embodied in the games of bowling and billiards. With its impressive ivory-colored terra-cotta façade, the Pioneer Arcade is the most ornate and intact example of the Chicago commercial recreation center type (commercially run bowling and billiard hall) still standing.

This report owes much to "Health Factories and Palaces of Pleasure: Bowling, Billiards, and the Chicago 'Rec,' 1895-1929," a thesis written by John Cramer in 2011 for the Master of Science in Historic Preservation Program at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. We thank Mr. Cramer for generously sharing his research and writing about the Pioneer Arcade, and for allowing us to excerpt and edit portions of his thesis for the last three sections of the report.

BUILDING HISTORY, DESIGN, AND CONSTRUCTION

Gust Regas, the original owner who commissioned the building of the Pioneer Arcade, was born in the Peloponnese region of Greece in 1894. In 1908 he immigrated to Chicago. With his brother Spiro, Regas started a shoeshine parlor business in West Humboldt Park in 1913. The Regases– particularly Gust who would become the manager of the operation–were part of a growing group of entrepreneurs looking to cater to an as-yet untapped, new market of bowling and billiards enthusiasts. After the close of World War I, demand for these newly respectable indoor sports led to an explosion of new recreation centers in large cities across the country, particularly in Chicago, which had, since the late nineteenth century, been the center of bowling interest in the Midwest.

With financing support from Pioneer Trust and Savings Bank (a designated Chicago Landmark at 4000 West North Avenue, 250 feet from the Pioneer Arcade), in early 1924 Gust Regas and his brother Spiro purchased a mostly vacant plot of just south of the fast-developing intersection of North Avenue and Pulaski Road. Only portions of this block



Above: The Pioneer Arcade (shown in black) is located at the southeast corner of the North Avenue and Pulaski Road intersection within the Humboldt Park Community Area on Chicago's West Side (see inset).

Below: Looking south down Pulaski. The Pioneer Arcade is on the left. (Photo by Patrick Pyszka)

along Pulaski Road had been improved, and a small, one-story, brick home occupied less than a quarter of the 100' wide x 125' deep parcel. The Regas brothers hired Jens J. Jensen, a Chicago architect with several local Greek clients. Jensen's design showed a facility unlike any in Humboldt Park, a large and extravagant structure befitting a downtown movie palace but dedicated instead to indoor sports. Together with investor Peter Danigeles, they began construction on the Pioneer Arcade in June of 1924, hiring the Neslo Wagstad Company as contractors.

The Regas brothers chose the name "Pioneer Arcade" for their auspicious new venture. The June 22, 1924, *Chicago Tribune* reported the building would cost $350,000 and that it would be "one of the city's finest," adding that it was claimed it would be "one of the most elaborate recreation buildings in the city." The article then detailed the building's touted features:

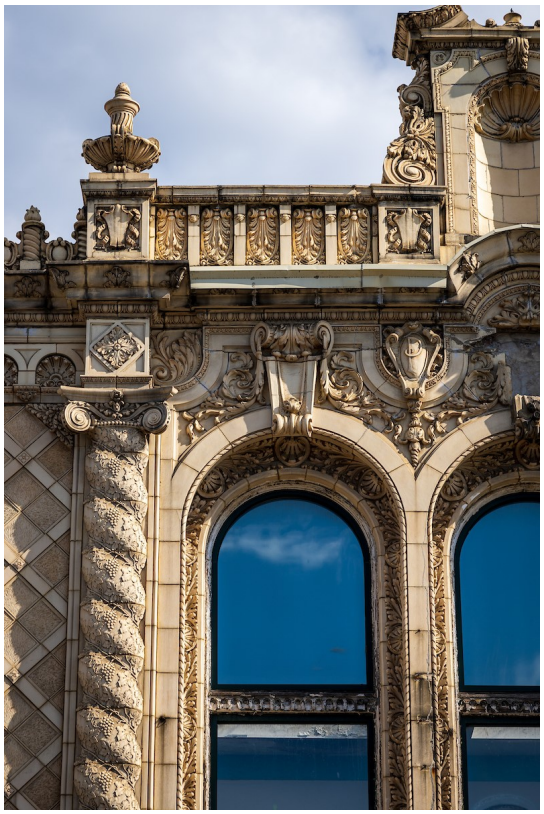
> The entire façade of the building will be of ivory terra cotta in elaborate Spanish design. There'll be four shops on the ground floor, the remainder of the building being devoted to recreation rooms.
>
> The main floor lobby will lead directly into the billiard room which will have thirty-five tables. A broad tile staircase, with ornamental railings, will connect the lobby with the main lounge for both men and women, which will extend across the entire front of the building.
>
> There'll be twenty bowling alleys adjoining the lounge with spectators' platforms to accommodate 600 at one time. The third floor will be given over to locker rooms, store rooms and special rest rooms and showers.
>
> A mechanical ventilating system throughout the building is promised and it is presumed this means a cooling system for the summer.

The city's final inspection of the new building was complete by March of 1925. Architect Jens J. Jensen's recreation center was designed to impress. The richly decorated Pulaski Road façade, a two-story expanse of terra-cotta ornament, resembled that of an exotic Spanish palace, complete with balustraded balconies in front of the upper windows. The Pioneer's outside marquee mimicked those of the glittering movie palaces downtown, so much so that passersby often mistook it for a cinema.

At street level, the building housed four storefront tenant spaces. Along North Avenue and increasingly along Pulaski Road over the course of the 1920s, storefront buildings sprung up to sell goods and services to those who lived in the residential areas surrounding the intersection and to those who worked nearby at places like the North Western Railroad's Pulaski shops or the factories along the Belt Line Railroad to the west. In 1928, number 1535 housed Thomas Pappas's hat cleaning shop; 1537, a barber named Peter Rousos; 1539, the "Arcade Lunch Room" (also owned and operated by Gust Regas); and 1541, a Singer Sewing Machine sales and repair shop. Later, Gust Regas combined the two south tenant spaces which opened directly into the lobby to house a new lunchroom and cigar vendor. Almost a century later, the Pioneer Arcade looks much the same. The building occupies its entire 100' wide by 125' deep lot without setbacks. An alley runs along the north and east facades. A one-story brick commercial structure to the south was demolished in 2019, leaving a large, mid-block, vacant lot to the south.

Above: The Pioneer Arcade circa 1928. (Source: North and Pulaski Historical Society)

Below left: the 2nd-floor bay and parapet. Below right: latticework terra-cotta design on the 2nd floor. Below corner: column capital and decorative lintel. (Photos by Patrick Pyszka)



The building is two stories tall with a very small, rectangular, third-floor-level room at the southeast corner. Additionally, the second floor is taller than the first as it was designed to accommodate mezzanine seating along the inside of the building's west wall. The roof is flat at the west end with a narrow rectangular pop-up containing HVAC equipment set back substantially from the tall, front parapet. To the east of the pop-up are two skylights. The eastern two-thirds of the roof rises somewhat with dual barrel shapes running east to west.

The west (front) elevation is clad in a subtle mix of ivory, cream, and tan terra cotta while the north, east, and south elevations are red common brick with scattered window openings, many of them bricked in. At the front, the facade is divided into three bays framed by flat piers at the first floor and decorative columns directly above at the second floor. Squared Corinthian columns frame entries and storefronts at the sidewalk. Above the columns, terra-cotta-clad lintels with designs of garlands, medallions, and acanthus leaves span each bay. The bowl-shaped portion above each column capital has a center rosette with consoles at each side. An intermediate cornice delineates the first from the second floor.

The second floor has a central bay with three elongated, arched windows. A balconet is centered on each of the side bays. Foliate and medallion panels define the base while an arcaded cornice topped by a parapet with extended torches create a dramatic crown. Terra cotta decoration at the second floor is even more elaborate. Motifs include latticework (walls, corner columns), twisted shapes (columns at the sides of the central bay, edges of the arched window openings), and arcades (the frieze, fascia of the arched window transoms). Classical elements such as columns and acanthus leaves are plentiful but so are less typical elements including shells or shell-shaped foliage (top of the central niche, above the balconets, above side bay windows, concave jambs of the arched window openings), torches (extending upward from the parapet, atop the window surrounds), and cartouches (the parapet), the ones in the spandrels of the center bay featuring the letter "P."

At either side of the lobby, three arched openings led to the tenant spaces beyond while a central stair led to the second floor. The billiards hall was to the east, accessed via short halls at either side of the stair. Very large ceiling beams in the billiards hall allowed for a minimal four columns so floor area could be maximized. The central staircase split to a double flight, allowing patrons to arrive at either side of the second-floor visitor lounge. At the northwest and southwest corners of this room, mezzanine levels provided viewing galleries for spectators who looked eastward toward the eighteen bowling alleys which terminated at the pin-setting area along the east wall. Stairs at the southeast corner provided access to a small third floor which housed locker rooms, showers, and spaces for storage. The original mezzanine viewing areas have been altered and the original floor and bowling lanes were covered over during a modernization phase and little, if any, historic fabric remains. On the first floor, tenant spaces have been completely altered and portions of the staircase have been boxed in while historic finishes in the lobby have been replaced or damaged.

From its opening, the Pioneer Arcade thrived as a bowling alley and billiard hall, regularly hosting private and employer-sponsored league tournaments and city-wide competitions and becoming a long-term fixture in the social life of Humboldt Park. The much-beloved manager of the Pioneer, Carl Jorgensen (called "Jorgy"), oversaw the facility from its opening until 1945. In the late 1920s, the Pioneer came under the control of the William and Otto Goldammer, the operator of several West Side establishments. Gust Regas stayed on at the Pioneer for many years and later opened Riviera Lanes in Melrose Park, Illinois. Gust Regas died in 1986.

Above left: second floor; Above right corner: elaborate window hood above balconet, arcaded cornice, and parapet with stylized torches; Above right: first floor. (Photos by Patrick Pyszka)

Below: the Pioneer Arcade circa 2000, after it was put up for sale. Champion bowler Luis Gonzalez was the last owner to operate a bowling alley in the "Pioneer Bowl."

During its nearly eighty years of operation, the Pioneer Arcade went through a string of owners but remained a commercially run bowling and billiards hall, a type of business known as a "recreation center," "commercial rec ," or "rec" for short. The last owner who operated a bowling alley in the building, entrepreneur and champion bowler Luis Gonzalez, sold the renamed Pioneer Lanes in the mid-2000s to the Hispanic Housing Development Corporation.

THE SPANISH BAROQUE REVIVAL STYLE

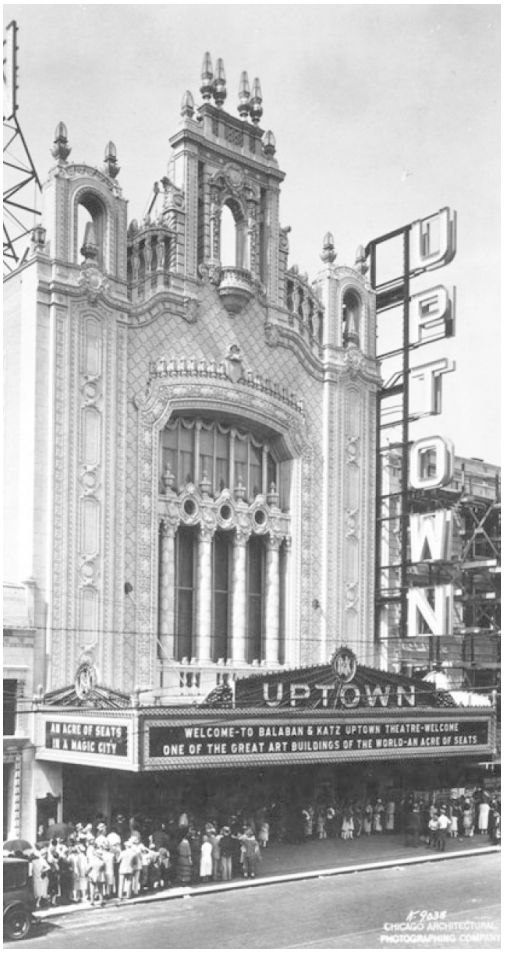
The Pioneer Arcade is an excellent example of the Spanish Baroque Revival architectural style, rarely used for Chicago buildings. Baroque art and architecture flourished in Spain between 1650 and 1750 largely through the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church which embraced dazzling architecture and fine arts. The most exuberantly ornamental phase of the Spanish Baroque was named after the Churriguera family, who worked mainly around Salamanca, Spain. The term "Churrigueresque" denotes the visually frenetic, twisting, and lavishly sculptural ornamentation that began to characterize much Spanish architecture by the end of the seventeenth century. Typical Churrigueresque ornamental features include the twisted or "Solomonic" column, especially those with composite order details; exuberant ornamentation especially above the main entrance; and forms from the Classical style of architecture.

Spanish Baroque architecture was transplanted across the Atlantic to Spain's colonies in the Americas beginning in the sixteenth century. Elements of the style can also be seen in the relatively plain mission churches constructed in the American southwest, which was at the fringes of Spain's colonial empire. The missions typically featured plain, stucco-clad walls, twin bell towers, clay-tile roofs, and, occasionally, a sculpturally decorated entrance portal. Compared to the Spanish Baroque churches of Central and South America, the comparatively plain mission churches represent the frontier manifestations of the exuberant baroque style.

It was at the Panama-California Exposition, held in San Diego in 1915, that the Spanish Baroque style was revived by architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, a nationally prominent architect who had previously authored a detailed study of Spanish Colonial architecture. The versatile Goodhue was also a proponent of the Gothic Revival movement, designing such ecclesiastical buildings as Rockefeller Chapel at the University of Chicago from 1928 (5850 South Woodlawn Avenue; a designated Chicago Landmark).

The revival of the Spanish Baroque in early twentieth-century America was characterized by the use of applied terra-cotta ornament which was readily adaptable to the extravagant ornament of the style. The Spanish Baroque Revival style reached its greatest popularity during the 1920s and 1930s, particularly for the large movie palaces of the period like the Uptown Theatre from 1925 (4816 N Broadway; a designated Chicago Landmark) and for dance halls like the nearby Aragon Ballroom of 1926 (1106 West Lawrence Avenue; located in the Chicago Landmark Uptown Square District). It was a natural choice for entrepreneurs desiring to appeal to a public seeking escape from the everyday through exotic architecture Entertainment began on the outside and continued on the interior where "atmospheric" architecture placed patrons in plaster mock-ups of palace courtyards or central squares of picturesque villages. Like many revival styles of architecture, the Spanish Baroque fell out of fashion after World War II.

Above: Pioneer Arcade, 1936. (Source: Cook County Clerk of Court Archive)



Left: The Spanish Baroque Revival-style Uptown Theater by Rapp & Rapp, built 1925. (Source: Theatre Historical Society of America)

Below: The Spanish Baroque Revival-style Aragon Ballroom, 1927, by Huszagh & Hill, built 1926. (Source: Louisgrell.com)

Architect Jens J. Jensen

Architect Jens J. Jensen (1891 -1969), the designer of the Pioneer Arcade, is often mistaken for noted Prairie-style landscape architect Jens Jensen. Danish-born Jens J. Jensen immigrated to Chicago as a child at the turn of the twentieth century. He attended Chicago's Lewis Institute and apprenticed with the architecture firm of Francis M. Barton. He began his practice in Chicago in 1915 and became a member of the Illinois Society of Architects by 1921.

During the nationwide economic expansion of the 1920s, Jensen designed and built several block-size multi-use developments for Chicago and suburban clients. These designs were typically composed of ground floor commercial storefronts and one to two stories of apartments above. He often worked with Greek American developer George W. Prassas, establishing a partnership that produced several commercial and residential projects on Chicago's North and Northwest Sides. Many Jensen-Prassas collaborations still stand, with Classical Revival a favorite style. Their developments can still be seen at places like the northeast corner of West Argyle Street and North Kenmore Avenue or the southwest corner of North Pulaski Road and West School Street.

The dramatic Pioneer Arcade likely brought attention to Jensen which helped him to obtain two even larger commissions: the 300 West Adams Loop office building (a Chicago Landmark) completed in 1927 and the monumental Guyon Hotel located at 4000 West Washington Street completed in 1928. With the advent of the Great Depression in 1929 the collaboration of Jensen and Prassas ended. George Prassas would later expand on his commercial development success and become a pioneer builder of the first large-scale suburban shopping malls.

Jensen's later career was focused on retail architecture. As early as the late 1930s and continuing through the 1950s, Jensen was a leading designer for the Charles L. Schrager Company, the developers of Jewel Food Stores throughout the Chicago area. Jensen worked almost exclusively for Schrager until the mid-1950s. His son, Jens J. Jensen, Jr., became partner of their firm in 1955. The newly renamed firm of Jensen & Jensen designed dozens of mid-century modernist-style Jewel market facilities across the Greater Chicago area. Jens J. Jensen, Sr., retired from architecture in 1961 and died in Phoenix in 1969. Jensen's son continued the family firm until retirement, passing the reins to Jensen's architect grandson Jarrett Jensen. The firm of Jensen and Jensen retains offices in Oak Brook, Illinois.

Bowling and Billiards Become Mainstream with Chicago as Their Midwestern Center

Bowling and billiards were commonplace in the back rooms of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century saloons across Chicago. Players might compete against each other, but such contests were largely informal. The 1900s and 1910s saw a critical shift in how bowling and billiards were played and how players saw themselves and their games. Players, particularly bowlers, began to organize more formal competitions, but ran up against non-uniform lanes and rules. Billiard games, too, were variations of traditional pool, snooker, and carom, and were played on different size tables with different size pockets, with cues and balls of varying sizes and weights. Order would need to be imposed on the sports before serious competition could be held.

Far left: Jens J. Jensen in the 1920s. (Credit: Garrett Jensen, Jensen & Jensen Architects)

Left: Postcard of Hotel Guyon by Jensen, 1928.

Middle: Jensen's commercial building at SW corner of Pulaski and School. (Source: Google.)

Lower left: 300 West Adams St. office building. (Source: 1928 *Handbook for Architects and Builders: Illinois Society of Architects*)

Lower right: ad with mid--century modern Jewel grocery stores designed by Jensen. (*Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan. 9, 1954)

Though for fifty years Chicago had been a gathering place for bowling enthusiasts, events in the last decade of the nineteenth century cemented the city's reputation as the Midwest center of a new national indoor sports movement. In 1895, bowling enthusiasts from New York and the Midwest formed the American Bowling Congress in New York City and established regulations for alley size, scoring, and game rules. This uniformity allowed greater opportunity for competition and Chicago assembled its first bowling league by 1896. Five years later, Chicago was host to thirty leagues, made up of players from nearly three hundred clubs. Though a women's league had not yet been formed, there were seventy-five known women's clubs.

Tainted by the games' association with taverns, promoters also sought respectability for indoor sports through visibility of the game and suppression of gambling's influence to control game outcomes. High-stakes competition attracted attention and prize money pooled together by member leagues lowered the incentive for meddling. In 1901, Chicago hosted the first modern bowling tournament in the United States, when forty-one teams from across the nation competed for a $1200 prize. That same year, the *Chicago Eagle* declared that "nothing more remarkable has occurred in the world of indoor sports in the history of Chicago than the growth of interest in bowling."

In 1915, to assuage anti-drinking and -gambling forces in the city, the Chicago Bowling and Billiards Protective League was formed to clean up indoor recreation's reputation. The first elected members of the League's executive committee read like a "who's who" of Chicago's bowling and billiards leaders. Each member hall proprietor was obligated by the League's bylaws to "conduct his bowling alley or billiard hall in an orderly and unobjectionable manner" and to "discourage objectionable and illegal practices."

To increase public awareness of the League itself, members arranged large city tournaments with cash prizes and trophies donated by the Chicago-based Brunswick Company, the nation's largest supplier of bowling and billiards equipment. The League organized one of the first pocket billiards world championship games, held in Chicago in 1916. The true work of the League, however, was to act as an advocate for indoor sports hall proprietors in courts of law and in the court of public opinion. League-retained counsel defended maligned room owners in illegal gambling cases. The League even endorsed local political candidates friendly to bowling and billiard hall owners and their interests.

In 1918, League members joined with representatives of the Chicago Athletic Association to try to repeal the 1911 ordinance limiting licensing to operators who constrained alleys or tables to the ground floor and therefore, it was thought, open to moral surveillance from the sidewalks. The progress of the League in appealing to the City Council is unclear and resolution of the matter is not reported in Chicago newspapers. Reform advocates and indoor sports were locked into an ongoing fight. In 1922, another ordinance was passed similar to the previous restricting play to street level, yet basement and second-floor alleys and tables were still seen in recreation centers built in the 1920s including the Pioneer Arcade, suggesting that enforcement was at least weakened by the standard-establishing League.

Relative to bowling, billiards experienced a less formal regulation movement and was without a national governing body until 1921 when the National Billiard Association (NBAA) was formed with the monetary and organizational assistance of Brunswick. Similar to bowling, this would pave the way for more formal, high-profile, and lucrative competition on local, state, and national levels. By the 1930s, Chicago had established itself as a center for billiards exhibitions and was home to nationally recognized players like Allen Hall. Hall made the Pioneer Arcade his signature establishment, thereby raising its profile with well-publicized tournament play in a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Left: pin from the first American Bowling Congress tournament which took place in Chicago in 1901. (Source: International Bowling Museum & Hall of Fame)

Below: Promotional photo of Allen Hall, circa 1929. Hall was a Three-cushion Billiards World Championship Finalist in the 1931 tournament held in Chicago. The Pioneer Arcade was called his "home room" by the *Chicago Tribune* in 1939. (Source: Ebay.com)

Recreation Centers in Chicago

Commercial recreation centers, like the Pioneer Arcade, could not have been viable ventures prior to the 1920s. Negative public opinion of bowling and billiards relegated them to saloon back rooms for the sports' first decades in America. But when they finally were barred from traditional barroom entertainments by Prohibition and enticed by the allure of Chicago's new recs , 1920s bowlers and pool players flocked to the commercial recreation centers rising at the busy intersections of major neighborhood business districts.

With more money to spend and more time in which to spend it, early twentieth century enthusiasts of "indoor sports" were becoming increasingly demanding consumers of amusement. Like moviegoers of the period, bowlers and pool players went to recreation centers seeking entertainment and escape. In a saturated entertainment market, expectations were high. As with their movie palace cousins, the best recreation centers were visual and sensory presentations with indoor sports only one part of the show. Owners were challenged to offer the most up-to-date climate control and playing equipment; amenities like in-house barbers, cigar shops, and dining options; and attentive staff which gave patrons the sense that one was cared for as one would be in an exclusive Michigan Avenue club.

Though large commercial recreation centers were a new phenomenon in American popular culture in the 1920s, their design could be traced back to leisure architecture from earlier decades. Social and architectural elements of working-class taverns, upper-class private athletic clubs, community and non-profit organization athletic buildings, and later entertainment architecture might all be discerned in the commercial form built by private entrepreneurs.

Most Chicago commercial recreation centers built between 1900 and 1930 were found along the busiest urban thoroughfares within walking distance of growing residential neighborhoods and close to stops along Chicago's ever-expanding elevated train system. They were usually one to two stories. The most elaborate recs were built in ecstatic revival styles and were usually accessed through grand stylized lobbies. The sports facilities themselves could be extensive--the largest of Chicago's recreation centers encompassed tens of thousands of square feet and could house up to ninety pool tables and fifty bowling alleys.

Commercial recreation centers served roles in their communities beyond simple bowling centers or pool halls. They were sports academies where novices could receive instruction in the day's most popular indoor games. They took on the role of de facto neighborhood social hall and gathering space where hundreds of spectators could gather almost daily to watch city-wide and regional tournaments and exhibition shows. In larger recs, one could sometimes find indoor golf courses, dancehalls, or even makeshift boxing rings. They were open all year in all seasons, warm in winter and air-conditioned in the summer. They often had their own lunch counters or cafes, stores and service providers, and lounges, and offered inviting, safe, and inexpensive evening and weekend entertainment for Chicagoans of almost every income, ethnicity, age, or gender.

Commercial recreation centers' designers borrowed liberally from the design ideology and styles of community, sports, and entertainment architecture. Even the term "recreation center" was borrowed, taken from the late nineteenth-century name for public park field houses. Until the national economic collapse of 1929 decimated the American building industry and the spending power of indoor sportsmen, rec owners continued to build newer and bigger recreation centers.

Not all rec centers succeeded and by the mid-1920s, newer and larger recreation center developments had come to dominate Chicago's indoor sports landscape. Chicago rec managers learned the lesson downtown sports hall owners had known for decades: running a larger facility with more alleys and tables was a more sustainable business model than running a small outfit. Competition among the city's recs was fierce, especially with sports and facility technology improving every year. Successful rec owners found that the minimum number of alleys needed to stay afloat was six and that while increasing the number of lanes meant more maintenance, it also meant more profits. By 1926, there were only 168 dedicated bowling rooms open in the city of Chicago, with each room on average housing 6.5 lanes. Ten years later, there were only 123 rooms in the city, but with an average number of lanes per establishment of 10.6.

The model of the large commercial recreation center found many champions in Chicago's indoor sports circles. Unsurprisingly, no entity influenced the building of recreation centers as much as the Chicago-based indoor sports equipment manufacturer Brunswick. After Prohibition's enactment in 1919, Brunswick urged proprietors to refurbish their old bowling alleys to attract new enthusiasts. With more ambitious customers, they did not hesitate to tout the benefits of building new, multi-story "recreation centers" with all the bells and whistles.

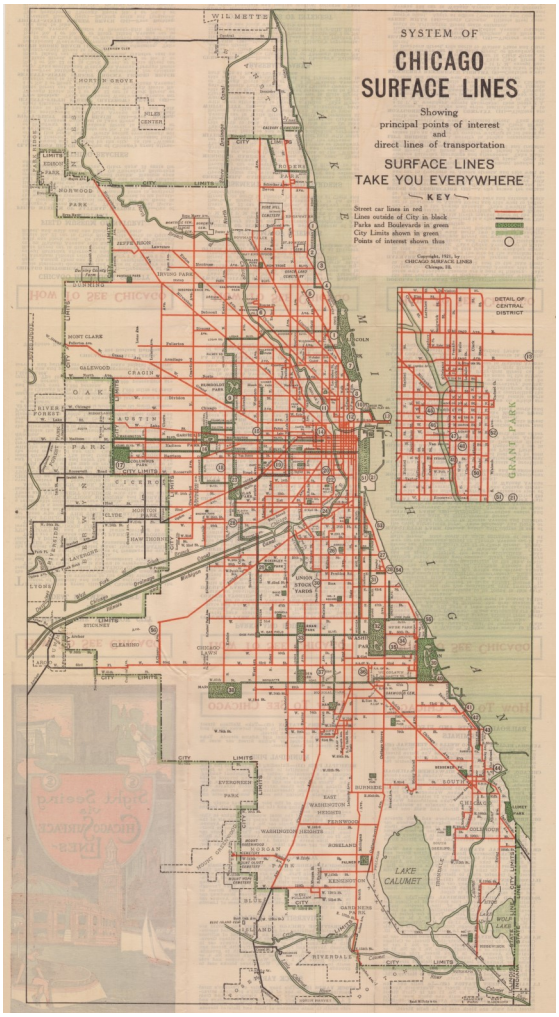
No doubt entrepreneurs took note of the discussion of rec centers in local and national media. Newspapers like Chicago's *Examiner* and *Tribune* regularly carried stories about prominent games and tournaments and about the construction of new recs. National sports periodicals like *Billiards Magazine* and *Bowlers Journal*, published in Chicago beginning in 1913, provided news on prominent indoor sports figures and events, along with profiles of newly built recreation centers and advice for operators.

It seems likely that Gust Regas would have been aware of the increasing number of tournaments and other recreation centers being built. The Pioneer Arcade was part of the wave of recreation centers which were built on a larger scale in order to make the business viable. Gust Regas also clearly understood the notion of indoor sports as entertainment and architecture's ability to convey that message—to this day, people still look at the fantastic façade and assume it must have been a grand movie theater. Regas also provided the creature comforts to keep his customers happy, investing in cooling ventilation for the summer heat (as did movie theaters), securing a barber as tenant, and arranging for an onsite café. Not only is the Pioneer Arcade an excellent example of the time in Chicago's history when neighborhood business districts were expanding and demand for the best in leisure facilities put bowling and billiard in the center of that local commercial expansion, it is an impressive building designed in an unusual style and one of the best remaining examples of a recreation center in Chicago.

THE NORTH AVENUE AND PULASKI ROAD COMMERCIAL AREA AND THE HUMBOLDT PARK COMMUNITY

The Pioneer Arcade is located at the intersection of North Avenue and Pulaski Road, two major arterial streets in Chicago. Originally ending two miles east at California, in 1895 the terminus of the North Avenue streetcar line was extended to Pulaski Road (known as North 40th Avenue at the time). By 1915, continuous streetcar service had been established along Pulaski Road (known as Crawford Avenue at the time) from 31st Street on the South Side to Bryn Mawr on the North Side.

Above: 1928, North and Pulaski, looking north. (Photo by Swain Scalf; Source: North and Pulaski Historical Society)



Right: 1921 Chicago Surface Lines map with streetcar lines shown in red. (Source: irm-cta.org)

Below: 1947, same intersection as above, with streetcars, looking north. (Source: North and Pulaski Historical Society)

In the early twentieth century, individual commercial buildings were built at most major arterial intersections, but commercial areas were even more likely to develop where streetcar lines crossed, creating "nodes" of commerce that capitalized on passengers transferring between different lines. At these "transfer corners," streetcar riders did convenience and impulse buying, and a variety of stores—increasingly including early chain stores like the Walgreen's drug store just north of the Pioneer Arcade, later a Woolworth's—found enough sales to justify the high rents due to rising land values and demand for retail space. Reflecting higher land values and commercial activity, these neighborhood commercial districts were typically characterized by taller (three- to four-story) buildings located at the corners of the principal intersecting streets, with sizes tapering off down the adjacent blocks. The intersection of North Avenue and Pulaski Road reflects this commercial development history.

The Pioneer Arcade is situated on the northwest side of the Humboldt Park Community Area, one of 75 Community Areas established by the University of Chicago in 1920, bound on the north by Bloomingdale Avenue, on the west by Kenton Avenue, on the south by Kinzie Street, and on the west roughly by Humboldt Boulevard. Prior to absorption into the city proper, the area roughly five miles west of downtown Chicago now called Humboldt Park was open prairie, dotted with small farms and settlements. Its proximity to Chicago and potential for development led to its incorporation in 1869, the same year William Le Baron Jenney began laying out the neighborhood's namesake Humboldt Park on the city's West Side.

After the Great Fire of 1871 destroyed much of the housing stock along the lakefront, fearful of more disasters and weary of the congestion of neighborhoods surrounding the Loop, large numbers of working-class Chicagoans, new immigrants, and longtime residents alike relocated to outlying areas like Humboldt Park. There, residential lots were being sold for less than $500 and developers quickly assembled street upon street of low-cost housing (all made of wood as Humboldt Park lay outside of the city's fire limits).

The gradual addition of more transportation infrastructure, most notably construction of -the Humboldt Park Branch of the Metropolitan elevated line in 1895 and continuing expansion of streetcar lines into the twentieth century, led directly to the increasing density of the neighborhood in the first decades of the twentieth century. By 1930, the population had peaked at 80,000, and portions of the neighborhood were overcrowded.

The intersection of North Avenue and Pulaski Road presented residents and visitors with a wide choice of commercial and entertainment options in the 1920s. The Pioneer Arcade was not the first at this intersection to meet the public's demand for bowling. A photograph from 1907 shows a Schlitz tied house at the northeast corner of the intersection with a bowling hall attached. The Tiffin Theatre at 4045 West North Avenue (now demolished) opened in 1922 on the site of an earlier theater and boasted seating for 2,000. By 1937, a Humboldt Park neighborhood survey found five theaters that together could seat over 5,000 moviegoers, 162 establishments with liquor licenses, eight billiard halls with forty tables, and three bowling alleys (one of which was the Pioneer Arcade) with a combined thirty-six alleys.

Today, a few of the great buildings representing this era remain. The Classical Revival New Apollo Theatre from 1914 (directly opposite the Pioneer Arcade) once sat 1,140 spectators but later was converted to a grocery store and subsequently a restaurant and banquet hall. The Classical Revival Pioneer Trust & Savings Bank (4000 West North Avenue, a designated

Chicago Landmark), completed in 1925, once financed many establishments in Humboldt Park including the Pioneer Arcade. These three architecturally significant buildings assert the importance of local neighborhood commercial centers in the history of Chicago.

The commercial center surrounding the Pioneer Arcade remains busy and is now lined with businesses and restaurants that serve the local Mexican and Puerto Rican communities. In the decades following 1960, Puerto Rican and Mexican immigrant populations replaced Humboldt Park's earlier majority immigrant groups, initially Germans, then Norwegian and Danish, and, by the 1930s, Italians, Polish, and German and Russian Jews. African Americans began to move into the area in substantial numbers starting in the 1970s and made up half the population by 1990. Latinos made up almost half of the area's population by 2000 and now are the majority.

Above: looking northwest from North Avenue toward the Pioneer Bank at Pulaski, circa 1960. (Source: North and Pulaski Historical Society)

Left: an August, 9, 1967, ad for the New Pioneer Bowl from the *Northwest Journal.* Sunday night features a Spanish American bowling team, reflecting the changing demographics of Humboldt Park.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a preliminary recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses sufficient historic integrity to convey its significance. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Pioneer Arcade at 1535-1545 North Pulaski Road be designated as a Chicago Landmark:

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

The Pioneer Arcade is an important manifestation of America's early twentieth-century leisure culture embodied in the games of bowling and billiards.

The Pioneer Arcade represented a new, family-friendly era for bowling and billiards, indoor sports which largely had been associated with saloons where most Chicagoans had played the games until Prohibition. Enticed by the allure of Chicago's new recreation centers, 1920s bowlers and billiard players flocked to the new recreation centers like the Pioneer Arcade that rose at the busy intersections of major neighborhood business districts throughout the city.

Chicago was the Midwestern center for a new national indoor sports movement at the turn of the twentieth century which revolved around bowling and billiards. In 1901, Chicago hosted the first modern bowling tournament in the United States with forty-one teams from across the nation and, in 1916, organized one of the first billiards world championship games.

Commercial recreation centers like the Pioneer Arcade served roles in their communities beyond simple bowling centers or pool halls. They were sports academies where novices could receive instruction. They took on the role of neighborhood social hall where spectators could gather almost daily to watch city-wide and regional tournaments and exhibition shows. They were open all year, warm in winter and air-conditioned in the summer and often had cafes and other stores and service providers. Commercial recreation centers offered inviting, safe, and inexpensive evening and weekend entertainment for Chicagoans of almost every income, ethnicity, age, or gender.

The Pioneer Arcade is sited at the southeast corner of North Avenue and Pulaski Road, the heart of a Humboldt Park neighborhood business district which included the 1925 Pioneer Trust & Savings Bank (extant), the 1914 New Apollo Theater (extant), and the 1922 Tiffin Theatre (now demolished), large-scale commercial structures which, along with the Pioneer Arcade, served as anchors for the commercial district.

Criterion 4: Important Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

The Pioneer Arcade is an excellent example of the Spanish Baroque Revival architectural style which reached its greatest popularity during the 1920s and 1930s, particularly for large movie palaces like the Uptown Theater (4816 North Broadway) and dance halls like the Aragon Ballroom (1106 West Lawrence Avenue). The revival of the Spanish Baroque in early twentieth-century America was characterized by the use of applied terra-cotta ornament which was readily adaptable to the often-extravagant decorative motifs and elements of the style. The Pioneer Arcade's front façade is an exuberant display of such terra-cotta design and craftsmanship.

The Pioneer Arcade, designed by architect Jens J. Jensen, is one of Chicago's grandest urban sports halls surviving from the 1920s, an outstanding example of a distinct commercial building type known as the "recreation center." Recreation centers were large, commercially run bowling and billiard halls typically located on Chicago's busiest urban thoroughfares within walking distance of growing residential neighborhoods.

Large commercial recreation centers like the Pioneer Arcade were a new phenomenon in Chicago's and the larger American popular culture in the 1920s whose design could be traced back to leisure activities and facilities from earlier decades. Social and architectural elements of working-class taverns, upper-class private athletic clubs, community and non-profit organization athletic buildings, and later entertainment architecture were the precedents for the commercial recreation center form built by Chicago's private entrepreneurs.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value.

The Pioneer Arcade retains its original location and massing. Original doors, door frames, and storefronts have been replaced as well as original, multi-lite, second-floor windows, but the window and door openings have not been altered. Windows have been blocked in at the north and south elevations. Yellow paint covers the first-floor and portions of the second- floor terra cotta with an additional layer of brown spray paint across the first floor and faded graffiti at the second floor.

Select terra-cotta elements have been lost at the west elevation including: the "flames" atop three torches on the parapet and those atop large, stylized torches at the north and south ends; the stylized torch atop the center of the parapet; three balusters from the north balconet;

cartouche elements with centered torch shapes formerly atop the transoms of the three arched windows; and the keystone above the central arched window. Short sections of the cornice are covered with aluminum panning and the condition of terra cotta underneath is unknown. There are cracked terra cotta units at isolated locations and assorted pins and plates from previous signage remain in the terra cotta.

Despite the loss of elements and some damage, the west elevation is remarkably intact and looks very much like it did historically. It is typical for buildings of this age to have replacement windows, doors, and especially storefronts but these are reversible. Paint can also be removed sensitively without damage to the underlying terra cotta. The Pioneer Arcade has more than sufficient integrity to qualify for landmark status.

Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark. Based upon its evaluation of the Pioneer Arcade at 1535-1545 North Pulaski Road, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as follows:

• All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building.

Commission staff also recommend that the following additional guidelines shall also apply to the Commission's review of permits pursuant to Section 2-120-740:

A. The Building consists of a Front Portion which includes the west (front) elevation, the north and south elevations, and roofline, measuring approximately 35' from the west elevation up to and including the wall behind the central stair, as depicted in Exhibit A.

B. The Building also consists of a Rear Portion, as depicted in Exhibit A, which extends eastward approximately 85' from the Front Portion.

C. The owner may seek demolition of the Rear Portion of the Building and the Commission shall
approve it, provided that the Front Portion of the Building is retained in place, repaired, and restored in accordance with the Standards and Guidelines of the Commission on Chicago Landmarks.

D. The Commission shall approve the construction of a six-story structure behind the Front Portion of the Building as shown in conceptual plans dated November 18, 2021, from which the section drawing is hereby attached as Exhibit B. It is understood that there may be minor changes as the project is developed, but the final project submitted for permitting must substantially conform to the conceptual plans.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CITY OF CHICAGO

Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

Kathleen Dickhut, Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Citywide Systems & Historic Preservation

Project Staff

Kandalyn Hahn (Project Manager), research, writing, layout

Matt Crawford, editing

Thanks to John Cramer for sharing his research and writing and thanks to Patrick Pyszka, Department of Assets, Information and Services, for photography.